

Deal firmly with tax evaders, FM says

NEW DELHI: Finance minister Arun Jaitley on Monday asked senior income tax officials to work in a non-adversarial, non-intrusive and fair manner but said they must deal firmly with tax evaders.

Jaitley also said the officers should make serious efforts to unearth black money within the country "which is quite large" and detailed efforts being made by the government to bring back black money stashed abroad.

Addressing a gathering of senior Income tax officials, Jaitley said the revenue targets fixed for direct taxes for the current financial year would not only be achieved but would also be surpassed. The Budget has pegged direct tax receipts at Rs 7,36,221 crore.

The finance minister said in order to achieve this target, the officers of Income Tax department will have to work with highest standard of ethics. "The finance minister said credibility of the department is its biggest asset," a finance ministry statement quoted the FM as saying.

The Narendra Modi government has taken several measures in the 2014-15 Budget to usher in predictable tax policies and bridge the trust deficit between the tax payers and the tax department.

Tax department officials have said there is a need to remove the perception that the authorities were unnecessarily going after individuals or companies.

The efforts is to usher in a tax-payer friendly image for the department as the government prepares to embark on the task of meeting tax revenue target against the backdrop of a challenging economic situation.

Top officials of the Income Tax department are brain storming in the capital during the two-day annual conference of principal chief commissioners, principal director generals, chief commissioners and director generals.

The finance minister acknowledged that the job of the officers was very difficult as they have to achieve the tax collection targets and also play the role of tax facilitator. The message from North Block to the senior tax officials was to be firm with evaders and work as facilitators for those trying to comply with rules.

Revenue secretary Shaktikanta Das said officers have to find innovative means to achieve their revenue targets and work in a non-adversarial and non-intrusive manner. He said officers of the department would have to achieve targets by using fair and transparent means.

Das said the efforts of the department should be to reduce tax arrears which totalled Rs. 4 lakh crore and ensure higher tax recovery. He also asked them to reduce tax litigation and avoid frivolous and avoidable litigation.

(Times of India)